ABSTRACT

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JOHN STEINBECK'S CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUALISTIC SURVIVAL OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine three rather diverse novels of John Steinbeck which are linked by unifying themes. The novels on which the study focuses are Tortilla Flat (1935), Of Mice and Men (1937) and The Grapes of Wrath (1939). The novels chosen not only represent the most significant works of the author, but also contain comparative elements and recurrent ideas. Considered a "novelist of the people," Steinbeck tends to focus on the common man who, in a continuous conflict with those external forces which tend to dehumanize a society or those internal forces which tend to make him subhuman, pursues a desirable and useful life, only to find that the pursuit is in vain. In the discussion of the unifying themes, the study will focus on Steinbeck's common people--the paisanos of Tortilla

Flat, George Milton and Lennie Small in Of Mice and Men, and the Joad family and other migrants in The Grapes of Wrath. The development of these novels is based on Steinbeck's use of contradictions between the life-styles and personalities of the characters in his novels. The study will also consider those literary techniques and philosophies from which the author develops his ideas.

Chapter One examines the internal and external struggles of the paisanos of Tortilla Flat. It considers the paisanos' lack of conventional morality and the reader's acceptance of that which is good in them as a result of the crude chivalry of these characters. The study also considers the internal struggle of the central character, Danny. It considers his desire for individuality, his apparent loyalty to his comrades and the conflicts innate in those situations which ultimately lead to his demise. The analysis shows that the dream or the desire to function on the same level as that of the bourgeois society described in the novel becomes destroyed as a result of the following: (1) the basic, conflicting character traits of the paisanos and of the bourgeoisie of the Monterey Valley, (2) the misguided acts of chivalry performed by the paisanos within the brotherhood, (3) the desire for personal freedom in conflict with the person's commitment to the brotherhood,

and (4) the lack of a purpose to sustain the bond that had been created by Danny and the paisanos around him.

Chapter Two examines the external forces which dominate the lives of George Milton and Lennie Small in Of Mice and Men. It considers Lennie as a fated victim of those elements which tend to dehumanize a society as well as George, who has become entrapped by those same dehumanizing elements. The analysis shows that the dream or the desire to achieve a mode of stability in the lives of George and Lennie also becomes destroyed due to several factors: (1) the handicap of Lennie, which gives him a propensity for unintentionally violent acts, (2) the unwillingness of the given society described in the novel to accept or tolerate Lennie's condition, (3) conflicts with others within the given society who too possess a type of handicap which makes them objectionable in their own society, and (4) the final destruction of George's companion Lennie, which in turn destroys the hope and the dream.

Chapter Three examines both the internal struggles of the ordinary man's attempt to pursue a meaningful life and the external forces which not only prevent him from doing so, but also cause human degradation in The Grapes of Wrath. It considers the symbolic elements of numerous episodes and those philosophies which are manifested in the

actions of the Joads and other migrants. The analysis shows how the dream or the desire to regain a viable existence within the American social structure becomes virtually annihilated as a result of the following: (1) natural disasters, as well as the economic exploitation that results in the forcible transferral of the land farmed by the Joad family and many other migrants to the banks and other lending institutions, (2) dissolution of the family unit as a result of death and desertion, (3) a loss of morale and a loss of morality as defined by the society of the novel, and (4) the use of unethical yet pragmatic means to survive the ultimate degradation placed upon them.

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INTRODUCTION

The novels of John Steinbeck are diverse on several levels. That fact is due in part to his experimentation as a novelist, which enabled him to create literary works with a variety of structures and themes, and in part to biographical aspects of his life which placed him in fascinating circumstances which are manifested in his work. The early portion of Steinbeck's life reveals various sources from which he derived some of his greatest fiction. Steinbeck's childhood was spent in the areas of the Pajaro and Jalon valleys to the north and south of Salinas and the Gabilan Mountains and Pacific Ocean to the east and west of Salinas.[1] It is in these areas that he became familiar with the inhabitants who would be the focus of such works as Cannery Row, Sweet Thursday, and, particularly, Tortilla Flat, one of three works to be discussed in this study. His childhood was characteristic of a young boy very cognizant of the world around him. He was very much aware of nature, and extremely sensitive to its processes as they relate to

[1]Peter Lisca, "John Steinbeck: A Literary Biography," in Steinbeck and His Critics, comp. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957), p. 3.

man. He wrote of those aspects of his early life which were of significance. Such memories as

> ...the way the sparrows hopped about on the mud street early in the morning when I [Steinbeck] was little...[and] the most tremendous morning in the world when my [Steinbeck's] pony had a colt...[2]

would have little importance to others; however, they impressed him greatly as a child. That experience of the birth of the colt would become explicit in his short novel The Red Pony.

His years in high school, as well as the years at Stanford University, were occupied with various experiences that would later become evident in his novels. He spent much of that time working on ranches as a hired hand and, at one point, laboring on a road gang. Those experiences would surface in the lives of the characters in such works as In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men, the second novel chosen for discussion within this study, and The Grapes of Wrath, the final novel discussed in this study. Another position which he held during his life as a student at Stanford was that of a chemist in a sugar beet factory; his experiences there with the Mexicans became another source for Tortilla Flat. He indicated that there were "some fine

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[2]Ibid., p. 4.

little things that happened in the big sugar mill when I was assistant chief chemist amd majordomo of about sixty Mexicans and Yaquis taken from the jails of northern Mexico" which were to be used in the novel.[3]

After Stanford, Steinbeck experienced in New York several disappointments and disillusionments--unpublished works, several jobs as laborer, reporter, and deckhand--and as a result he returned to California, but only to gain more experience as a common worker. He obtained positions as caretaker on Lake Tahoe and as a laborer in fish hatcheries. During that obscure period, which was also overshadowed by the Depression of 1929, he published his first novel, Cup of Gold, which too was relatively unsuccessful. It was not until the publication of Tortilla Flat in 1935 that Steinbeck experienced success as a writer and no longer had to work at odd jobs to compensate for works not published and published works that were unsuccessful.[4]

Steinbeck's previous experiences with laborers and his "grass-roots" information derived from workers involved in labor strikes during the 1930's became the source of his successful treatment of a California strike in In Dubious Battle. His sympathy with the common man in America becomes

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[3]Lisca, "Biography," pp. 6-7.

[4]Ibid., p. 9.

evident, as his concerns were not "with his protagonists as communists or capitalists but rather as humans 'subject to the weaknesses of humans and to the greatnesses of humans.'"[5] Furthermore, the publication of this novel established Steinbeck as an authority on the labor conflicts of California.[6] While briefly commissioned to write articles for the Nation and the San Francisco News concerning current labor problems, he wrote:

> This thing is very dangerous. Maybe it will be patched up for a while, but I look for the lid to blow off in a few weeks. Issues are very sharp here now.[7]

After the publication of Of Mice and Men in 1937, Steinbeck experienced the rousing success of the work both as a novel and as a Broadway play. However, his connections with the laborers were not destroyed. Shortly thereafter Steinbeck found himself in Oklahoma, where he associated with the migrant workers as they traveled from Oklahoma to California. He lived in the federal camps with the workers and became so involved with their plight that at one point he, though finally persuaded to do otherwise, planned to accept a $1000 contract from Hollywood for his work on Of

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[5]Lisca, "Biography," p. 10.

[6]Ibid., p. 11.

[7]Ibid.

Mice and Men for the purpose of giving the money to the migrants. His concern was genuine, for he wrote to an agent: "I'm sorry, but I simply can't make money on these people... the suffering is too great for me to cash in on it."[8] His life with the migrants provided the source for his greatest work, The Grapes of Wrath. Steinbeck received several honors for this novel, including the Pulitzer Prize and an election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

During all the national and international attention, Steinbeck received one humble, but noteworthy, honor. "A group of migrant laborers sent him a patchwork dog sewn from pieces of their shirt-tails and dresses and bearing around its neck a tag with the inscription 'Migrant John.'"[9]

It is on those of Steinbeck's novels which are products of his years of association with laborers of Oklahoma and California that this study focuses. The novels of Steinbeck, and particularly the novels Tortilla Flat (1935), Of Mice and Men (1937), and The Grapes of Wrath (1939), according to Frederick Ives Carpenter in "John Steinbeck: America Dreamer," fall into distinct categories. Carpenter suggests that Steinbeck, using a partisan technique, reveals

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[8]Lisca, "Biography," p. 13.

[9]Ibid.

characters who are dreamers "with imperfect realism: and that he [Steinbeck] depicts "dreams which are selfish and destroyed." Secondly, Steinbeck describes dispassionately "dreamers...with increasing realism; but...[with] dreams which, for one reason or another, were doomed to defeat."[10] Steinbeck himself on various occasions made statements that support Carpenter's observation. Steinbeck commented thus on the character of Mexicans, after a trip made possible by the sale of Tortilla Flat: "Mexico fades very quickly. I can't remember it very well. I think the people there live on a mental level about equal in depth to our dream level. The contacts I made there are all dreamlike."[11] He later remarked of Of Mice and Men that the novel was "a study of the dreams and pleasures of everyone."[12] Still later, when asked to reply concerning the political nature of The Grapes of Wrath, he noted that he was "simply listening to men talk and watching them act, hoping that the projection of the microcosm will define the outline of the macrocosm."[13]

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[10]Frederick Ives Carpenter, Steinbeck and His Critics, comp. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957), p. 77.

[11]Lisca, "Biography," p. 9.

[12]Ibid., p. 11.

[13]Ibid., p. 13.

Here the migrants represent diminutive figures in search of a universal dream.

Throughout these rather diverse novels, Steinbeck, although at different stages, remains consistent in his purpose. In portraying the common people he remains descriptive of the "interplay of dream and reality."[14] For the common man there is the perpetual desire for the American dream, which is the realization of the desirable and useful aspects of life, and the continuous struggle to attain that dream. For Steinbeck's characters such a dream becomes that of acceptance into society and freedom from exploitation in their society. It is also the continuous conflict with the external forces which tends to dehumanize the society or those internal forces which tend to make the common man subhuman. The study is divided into three chapters, each of which examines one of these novels in relation to its category of development, a procedure which reveals Steinbeck's shift from romantic, idealistic dreamers to realistic, pragmatic dreamers, all of whom suffer the experiences of having their illusions shattered.

Chapter One entitled, "Tortilla Flat -- Man and His Unrealistic Dreams," is a study of Steinbeck's common man, a

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[14]Carpenter, "American Dreamer", p. 68.

person who seeks dreams that are impractical in nature. The author's characterization of the paisanos of the novel will reveal the character's lack of that conventional morality which is characteristic of the American middle class. It also examines the acceptance of that which is good in them as a result of their crude chivalry. Their code of chivalry has allegorical features similar to that of Thomas Malory's Morte d'Author. A comparison of vital elements of each work demonstrates parallels between the structures as well as between the governing themes. The concept of "Escape and Commitment," as discussed by Peter Lisca in Steinbeck: The Man and His Works, will be examined in terms of Danny's relationship to the fraternity and his desire for individual freedom. As a result of destructive character traits, the misconceived idea of benevolence to the inhabitants of the Monterey Valley and Danny's desire for independence, the brotherhood of paisanos, along with its distorted dreams, is destroyed.

Chapter Two, entitled, "Of Mice and Men -- The Inevitable Destruction of Realistic Dreams," examines the friendship of George Milton and Lennie Small which makes their dream possible and the circumstances which defeat the dream - Lennie's handicap. Lennie, who is a victim of mental retardation, has a predilection for unintentional violence.

In both the novel and the actual world, society cannot and does not tolerate this condition; thus, the dream of becoming a functional part of society is destroyed. Steinbeck's concept of non-teleological thinking will reveal other factors that destroy the dream of both George and Lennie. To accept Steinbeck's concept, one must consider the principles of this ideology. In Lester J. Marks' discussion of Steinbeck's novels, he presents the author's definition as it relates to Steinbeck's works:

> ..."teleological thinking"...is frequently associated with the evaluating of causes and effects, the purposiveness of events. This kind of thinking considers changes and cures--what "should be" in terms of an end pattern...it presumes the bettering of conditions, often...without achieving more than a superficial understanding of those conditions. In their sometimes intolerant refusal to face facts as they are, teleological notions may substitute a fierce but ineffectual attempt to change conditions which are assumed to be undesirable, in place of the understanding --acceptance which would pave the way for a more sensible attempt at any change which might still be indicated.[15]

Steinbeck's treatment of the characters in Of Mice and Men reveals rejection of the ideas of "change and cure" in the natural process of things. He does not attempt to rationalize the major occurrence in the plot, which, he considers, would be a feeble attempt to understand and change elements

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[15]Lester Jay Marks, Thematic Design in the Novels of John Steinbeck (Paris: Mouton, The Hague, 1971), p. 20.

of existence itself. He, therefore, becomes non-teleological as his ideas are reasoned

> ...through "is" thinking, associated with natural selection as Darwin seems to have understood it. They imply depth, fundamentalism, and clarity--seeing beyond traditional or personal projections. They consider events as outgrowths and expressions rather than as results; conscious acceptance as a desideratum, and certainly as an all-important prerequisite. Non-teleological thinking concerns itself primarily not with what should be, or could be, or might be, but rather with what actually "is"--attempting at most to answer the already sufficiently difficult questions what and how, instead of why.[16]

Marks' view of Steinbeck's reconcilation of "his [Steinbeck's] scientific approach to life and his view of man's essentially emotional religiousness" is examined as it relates to his treatment of the illusions of the characters.[17] According to this critic, Steinbeck remains non-teleological, as he allows a series of unexplained, fateful events to exist in the human condition and to result in the death of Lennie Small. Again, the inner struggle that emanates from the concepts of "Escape and Commitment" will be examined as it relates to George, who is destined never to realize a desirable life.

The final chapter, entitled, "The Grapes of Wrath - Destruction of Valid and Essential Dreams," will reveal

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[16]Marks, Thematic Design, p. 21.

[17]Ibid., p. 19.

through several aspects of the annihilation of a man's ability to function independently within a social structure. It considers the external forces that prevent the Joad family from establishing a meaningful existence--the forces of nature, tradition, and the financial establishment--as eventually making the Joads, and other migrants, pragmatic lawbreakers.[18] Steinbeck's ideology of non-teleological thinking will be examined in the major characters Ma Joad, Tom Joad, and Jim Casey. Although he seems scientifically to observe the events of the novel as occurrences in a natural process and to consider the actions of the Joads and other migrants as common to man as a species of animal, Steinbeck remains esthetically aware, in that he attributes a higher level of meaning to the mere existence of the processes of nature.

> Man is man because he has the ability to perceive his position in the macrocosm, to perceive that he is related to the whole thing. Man discovers and reaffirms that all things are one thing and that one thing is all things. And it is this discovery of the physical unity of all things that provides him with his faith in a vast spiritual unity.[19]

The view of oneness in turn is manifested through his use of the philosophy of Transcendentalism. This philo-

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[18]Paul McCarthy, John Steinbeck (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 77.

[19]Marks, Thematic Design, p. 82.

sophy will be studied as it relates to the concept of "Escape and Commitment" for the characters Tom Joad and Jim Casey, especially in their desire for individuality and their sense of social consciousness. According to Frederick Ives Carpenter in his discussion of Transcendentalism, the concept includes a number of forms, philosophical and religious as well as societal. In defining the concept as it relates to these areas, Carpenter states that Transcendentalism is as follows: (1) philosophically, it is comparable to Idealism, as it was conceived by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Emerson derives his view from ideals of Immanuel Kant and John Locke and from the philosophy of Buddhism). It is his belief "that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses [and] that there was a very important class of ideas or imperative forms which did not come by experience but through which experience was acquired...;"[20] (2) religiously, it is based on the idea that the "human soul and the divine [were] in full concurrence...[furthermore] Transcendentalism merely sought to reassert the mysterious nature of God ('I am that I am') and to rediscover His manifestations in nature and

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[20]Frederick Ives Carpenter, "Transcendentalism," in American Transcendentalism: An Anthology of Criticism, ed. Brian M. Barbour (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 24.

in the soul of man;"[21] (3) societally, Transcendentalism is the belief that all members of social structure adhere "to a new hope, and in all companies do signify a greater trust in the nature and resources of man, than the laws or the popular opinions will well allow."[22] It is on these principles that the characters develop in the novel.

The conclusion will reemphasize those elements which focus on the failure of the ordinary laborer during the years of the Great Depression to exist on a level that is characteristic of the desire of all Americans to lead useful and purposeful lives.

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[21]Carpenter, "Transcendentalism," pp. 26-28.

[22]Ibid., p. 29.

CHAPTER ONE

TORTILLA FLAT -- MAN AND HIS UNREALISTIC DREAMS

Tortilla Flat shows Steinbeck's concern for the common man who seeks dreams that are impractical in nature. In this particular novel impracticality is an attempt on the part of the group of paisanos from the Monterey Valley to become functional in a middle-class social structure without possessing the necessary characteristics in the middle class. One must consider first the establishment of the unrealistic dream; later, on the basis of these romantic illusions, one can see how character traits as well as misguided adventure result in destroyed illusions.

First, a look at the paisanos and the cultural background gives an insight into the constant struggle to become part of the American middle class during the period following the First World War. The setting for this novel is in the Monterey Bay, an area very familiar to Steinbeck during his boyhood. As indicated in the preface to the novel, the bay consists of two distinct parts which establish markedly differing structures. "The lower parts of the town are inhabited by American-Italians, catchers and canners of fish."[1]

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[1]John Steinbeck, Tortilla Flat (New York: Penguin Books, 1935), p. 1.

The upper part of the valley is "on the hill where the forest and the town intermingle, where the streets are innocent of asphalt and the corners free of street lights..." (p. 1). It is here that "the old inhabitants of Monterey are embattled as the ancient Britons are embattled in Wales. These are the paisanos" (p. 1).

Steinbeck also becomes very explicit in characterizing the paisanos of the higher valley.

> What is a paisano? He is a mixture of Spanish, Indian, Mexican, and assorted Caucasian bloods. His ancestors have lived in California for a hundred or two years. He speaks English with a paisano accent and Spanish with a paisano accent. When questioned concerning his race, he indignantly claims pure Spanish blood and rolls up his sleeve to show that the soft side of his arm is nearly white. His color, like that of a well-browned meerschaum pipe, he ascribes to sunburn. He is a paisano...(p. 2).

What distinguishes the paisanos from the people of the lower half of Monterey is at first their racial distinction, concerning which Steinbeck's influence from Ed Ricketts and his view of the cephalopods of Monterey Bay become evident. Ricketts, a marine biologist, shared a close relationship with Steinbeck that lasted for almost two decades and resulted in the shared philosophy that animals, including man, react differently as individual organisms and as members of a group.[2] Steinbeck's descriptions become char-

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[2]Richard Astro, John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1973), p. 52.

acteristic of both taxonomy, the scientific study of classification of organisms, and ecology, the scientific study of those organisms and their relationship to their environment. Steinbeck also emphasizes cultural backgrounds as well as philosophical attitudes concerning their way of life with regard to habits, customs, and tradition.[3]

> One can easily live in it [the climate of Monterey] as the paisanos do when it pleases them, with a minimum of clothing and shelter. They can sleep, as for centuries before them, their Indian ancestors did, in the wood or on the beach. They gain their food, as did their Indian ancestors, by latter-day version of hunting, fishing, gathering, and barter, with minimum recourse to so-called gainful employment and the use of money. They eat what has been traditionally consumed in the area for centuries--beans, tortillas, some vegetables and fruit, some chicken and fish or other meat protein--and they drink the wine of California or anything else they can get hold of.[4]

The philosophical code exhibited by the paisanos can be attributed to two factors:

> ...negatively or conservatively, by means of a Thoreau-like economy to protect the integrity of the organism as biological man [as seen in the actions of the paisano fraternity]; and positively or liberally, by way of promulgating and sanction--a romantic image of a lifestyle for the man conceived as a conscious, self-regulating indivi-

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[3]Charles Metzger, "Steinbeck's Mexican-American," in Steinbeck: The Man and His Work, ed. Richard Astro and Tetsumaro Hayashi (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1971), p. 143.

[4]Ibid, pp. 142-143.

> dual [as seen in the actions of Danny as an individual].[5]

First, the paisanos, and particularly the paisano brotherhood of Danny and his friends, display the traditional for the paisano, as well as Transcendental, character of living economically. In a traditional sense, the paisanos' mode of living can be traced back to their ancestors, both Mexican and Indian, and in a Transcendental sense the paisanos live a life of simplicity, as one would according to the code which governed Thoreau during his time at Walden. The code, emphasizing existence on minimal amounts, seems to be that of the paisanos; however, unlike Thoreau, they lack the social awarenesses of the middle class--ownership and possession--and therefore have no concept of how the bourgeoisie live. For them authentic life is the minimal use of, or the possession of, money, and the minimal use of effort to maintain a living. As Steinbeck indicates early in the novel, they are "clean of commercialism, free of complicated systems of American business, and, having nothing that can be stolen, exploited, or mortgaged, that system has not attacked them vigorously" (p. 2). The system, being governed by commercial ethics, is not an integral part of the paisano life, although they will, at a later

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[5]Metzger, "Mexican-American," p. 143.

point, in fact apply some of its standards. Secondly, the group lives in a manner that is contradictory to that mandated by the "so-called Protestant work-ethic."[6]

> They do not work in order to avoid idleness or sin. They do not accept the concept of sin as a chastening and regulating instrument. Rather, they look upon the sinful act...as an unfortunate human fact to be punished or forgiven as each act warrants. They do not work to gain or defend the status, the approval, the luxury, that derive from traditionally symbolized wealth.[7]

Steinbeck's paisanos function successfully within the social structure of the upper part of Monterey, Tortilla Flat. They are in effect "dropouts" from their conventional society, yet they remain competitively equal within the structure which exhibits unconventionality.[8] So long as the paisanos (Danny and his friends) exist on this level, they are not in conflict with themselves or others. It is only on those occasions during which they attempt to show signs of industry and of respect for others that the unrealistic dream becomes established and the struggle becomes evident. Danny, upon returning home from his service in the army, is unwillingly thrust into the work-ethic of the

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[6]Metzger, "Mexican-American," p. 144.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Peter Lisca, "Escape and Commitment," in Steinbeck: The Man and His Works, ed. Richard Astro and Tetsumaro Hayashi, (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1971), p. 78.

middle class by becoming an heir to his grandfather's two houses. The ownership of property and the responsibility that accompanies ownership, standards sought by modern society, are rejected by Danny. Such ownership causes the undue burden of being lifted into a higher social class than that of his friends. Pilon reflects:

> When one is poor, one thinks, "If I had money I would share it with my good friends. But let that money come and charity flies away. So it is with thee, my once-friend. Thou are lifted above thy friends. Thou art a man of property. Thou wilt forget thy friends who share everything with thee, even their brandy" (p. 9).

Danny, as well as his friends, all become thrust into a higher status when Danny rents his second home to Pilon, who in turn rents portions of the second home to pay rent to Danny. However, the dream becomes more evident with Pilon's initial acceptance of the terms of rental:

> Pilon agreed, grumbling, but he would have agreed to much more, for he saw the elevation that came into a man who lived in his own house; and Pilon longed to feel that elevation (p. 13).

Steinbeck's irony of ownership becomes more apparent, in that Pilon has no means of paying rent and no desire to establish any means of paying for the rental property.

To eliminate the burden of rental, Pilon persuades Pablo to rent a portion of his home for the sum owed to Danny. Pablo, desiring an improved means of existence,

agrees. However, only Pilon knows his true intent:

> Pilon sighed with relief. He has not realized how the debt to Danny rode on his shoulders. The fact that he was fairly sure Pablo would never pay any rent did not mitigate his triumph. If Danny should ever ask for money, Pilon could say, "I will pay when Pablo pays (p. 19).

The parasitism that exists in the nature of the members of the brotherhood of the paisanos becomes more apparent as Pilon and Pablo persuade Jesus Maria Cocoran to rent a portion of the house for the precise amount due Danny. Steinbeck noticeably contrasts the character of Jesus Maria Corcoran with that of Big Joe Portagee. Just as Big Joe is representative of gross insensitivity within the brotherhood, Jesus Maria becomes the paradigm of humanity within the fraternity. The contrasts becomes apparent not only in Jesus Maria's family name, which indicates his non-Chicano ethnic legacy of Irish descent, but also in his selfless attitude and his generous acts of kindness to many in Tortilla Flat. Therefore Pilon and Pablo have little difficulty in persuading him to relinquish his money for the rental of Danny's house.

> Pilon walked beside Jesus Maria, touching him now and then under the elbow to remind him that he was not a well man. They took him to their house and laid him on a cot and, although the day was warm, they covered him with an old comforter. Pablo spoke movingly of those poor ones who writhed and suffered with tuberculosis. And then Pilon pitched his voice to sweetness. He spoke with reverence of the joy of living in the little house...At last Pilon and Pablo moved in

> on Jesus Maria as silent hunting Airedales converge on their prey. They rented the use of their house to Jesus for fifteen dollars a month (p. 26).

On one hand, the paisanos have established themselves as figures of the American middle class; however, the unrealistic nature of this dream becomes evident as the brotherhood refuses to accept the responsibilities of a bourgeois existence.

Steinbeck's characters, by virtue of the tradition and culture, are in conflict with the standards of the American middle-class vision; and the brotherhood formed by Danny is in conflict as a result of their code of conduct, which blatantly contrasts with that of a middle-class social structure. They possess a code of chivalry, as Steinbeck parallels its features with that of Thomas Malory's Morte d'Arthur.

> For Danny's house was not unlike the Round Table, and Danny's friends were not unlike the knights of it. And this is the story of how that group came into being, of how it flourished and grew to be an organization beautiful and wise. This story deals with the adventuring of Danny's friends, with the good they did, with their thoughts and their endeavors. In the end, this story tells how the talisman was lost and how the group disintegrated (p. 1).

During Joseph Fontenrose's discussion of Tortilla Flat he clearly outlines those elements which demonstrate parallel structures as well as theme. The sequence of events in the

novel parallel those of Malory, with Danny, being that Arthur who had inherited a kingdom, inheriting his grandfather's houses. He had become a lord of the land by experiencing "'the mystic quality of owning a house.'"[9] The newly crowned king experienced trouble with his subjects, just as Danny experiences the problem of the collection of rent from Pilon and Pablo. As in Morte d'Arthur, the king (Danny) and his subjects (Pilon and Pablo) are reconciled and the Round Table is established, as Danny invites Pablo and Pilon to move in with him after the burning of the rented house.[10] They become devoted to each other, and they share a sense of loyalty that is a result of camaraderie as well as of tradition.

> The men that Danny collects about him - Big Joe, the Pirate, Jesus Maria, Pilon, Pablo - respect one another. The men take in the Pirate as a member and accept his five dogs as a part of the brotherhood. They allow Pilon to reason out their activities because he is fond of his ability at logic. Big Joe's bluntness is accepted, and Jesus Maria's humanitarian instincts are honored.[11]

As Fontenrose parallels the adventures of Danny's knights with those of Arthur, one notes the unrefined nature of

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[9]Joseph Fontenrose, John Steinbeck (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 36.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Tetsumaro Hayashi, A Study Guide to Steinbeck (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), p. 226.

their activities, which ultimately puts them in conflict with conventional society. Just as Arthur and his knights aid Pelleas in his search for the Grail, so do Danny, through the ingenuity of Pilon, and his knights aid the Pirate with his treasure.[12] However, the circumstances under which they seek out the Pirate remains unscrupulous. The group turns its attention to the Pirate as a means of support, with the intention of using the treasure that the Pirate saved for the purchase of a candlestick for San Francesco d'Assisi (the Italian saint who became founder of the Franciscan order):

> Then Pilon spoke. He told the Pirate that worry was killing his friends, but if he would live with them, then they could sleep again with their minds at ease..."poor little lonely man," Danny added. "If I had known, I would have asked him long ago, even if he had no treasure" (pp. 46-47).

Once again, under the pretext of genuine concern, the paisanos establish an unethical means of support.

The demon women in Malory's version also manifest themselves in the characters of Tortilla Flat. Sweets Ramirez becomes a temptation to Danny in the novel. In a display of loyalty, the brotherhood seeks to free Danny from the love affair which has preoccupied their leader and has drawn

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[12]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 36.

him away from the group. Their use of violence, often displayed, becomes the means by which the deed will be done. It becomes evident as the paisanos declare war against Dolores Engracia Ramirez, who has entangled Danny in a rather awkward love affair.

> At first his friends ignored his absence, for it is the right of every man to have these little affairs. But the weeks went on, and as a rather violent domestic life began to make Danny listless and pale, his friends became convinced that Sweets' gratitude for the sweeping-machine was not to Danny's best physical interest. They were jealous of a situation that was holding his attention so long...Wherefore the friends, in despair, organized a group for and dedicated to her destruction (p. 76).

Still further, Fontenrose parallels the rescue of Guinevere with that of Teresina Cortez and "her inumerable brood of children of doubtful paternity."[13] Benevolence is shown in the paisanos' attempt to aid Teresina and her family. However, during this attempt at chivalry crude elements that are unacceptable to society become evident. The end result does not justify the means. To aid the family, which has been reared completely on beans, Jesus Maria and the others of the group steal from the merchants of Tortilla Flat, only to have the children become ill owing to the healthful, nutritious diet of a modern society.

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[13]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 36.

> Theirs [the paisanos] was no idle boast. Fish they collected. The vegetable patch of the Hotel Del Monte they raided. It was a glorious game. Theft robbed of the stigma of theft, crime altruistically committed--what is more gratifying (p. 109)?

The paisanos correct this error by more thefts committed in a bean warehouse; thus, the children of Teresina receive their proper, or at least accustomed, nutrition. Ultimately, the paisanos' chivalrous acts become gratifying physically as well as emotionally:

> ...Teresina discovered, by a method she found to be infallible, that she was going to have a baby. As she poured a quart of new beans into the kettle, she wondered idly which one of Danny's friends was responsible (p. 111).

> The best of their ethics is impulsive kindness as evidenced by...their kindness to Teresina and her...children...The kindness involved burglary on a considerable scale.[14]

The means--burglaries--is characteristic of the unrestrained qualities of the brotherhood and ultimately results in the group's being outcasts according to the social norm.

In Arthur's court there appears an old man with a child, Galahad, who later rises to a magnitude worthy and most elegant.[15] In Danny's court there appears a Mexican corporal with, however, a sickly child whose destiny is to

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[14]Lincoln R. Gibbs, "John Steinbeck, Moralist," Antioch Review 2 (Summer 1942): 177.

[15]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 36.

be greater than that of his father. As a result of the humanitarianism of Jesus Maria Corcoran, the paisanos befriend the young Mexican corporal with his child. Jesus Maria, who had been standing on Alvarado Street, has encountered the scene of the corporal who had been in conflict with the policeman because of the policeman's inability to understand the corporal's Spanish and the policeman's refusal to allow the corporal to sit with his child any longer in the gutters of Alvarado Street. Jesus Maria, who is "a pathway for the humanities (p. 81)," has claimed to be a friend of the young man and has assured the policeman that he will provide for their needs. The young corporal had suffered disgrace at the hands of his Captain, who had taken the young man's wife. His child, who has suffered severely from a lack of sufficient care, is dying. The paisanos do all they can to save the child, but his death is inevitable. What undermines their humanitarian attempt is the violent nature of the paisanos' rationale for avenging the death of the child and the seduction of the corporal's wife. Pilon first reflects on former acts of revenge for such offenses.

> My grandfather suffered at the hands of a priest, and he tied that priest naked to a post in a corral and turned a little calf in with him. Oh, there are ways (p. 86).

He then considers the present situation.

> In a soft tone, almost a benediction, Pilon said, "Now you yourself must kill the capitan. We honor you for a noble plan of revenge [but] that is over and you must take your own vengeance, and we will help you, if we can" (p. 87).

The Mexican, however, has a different view of revenge. His cultural background and personality contrast with those of the paisanos, and his plan of revenge sharply contrasts that of the brotherhood. "The corporal does not adjure violence per se: he has a better idea. He would try to work within the system by maximizing its use and effectiveness."[16]

> "Well," said the corporal, "my wife was so pretty, and she was not any puta, either. She was a good woman, and that capitan took her. He had little epaulets, and a little sash, and his sword was only of a silver color. Consider,"... if that capitan, with the little epaulets and the little sash, could take my wife, imagine what a general with a big sash and a gold sword could take" (p. 87).

Fontenrose further parallels the reconciliation of Big Joe Portagee with Danny's knights and the reassembling of Arthur's knights after the quest for the Grail.[17] However, the vital causes of the breach of loyalty and the methods to deal with those causes become unorthodox according to the middle-class structure. Here violence reaches an extreme, as it is used to punish Joe's breaking his oath of

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[16]Hayashi, Study Guide, p. 227.

[17]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 36.

loyalty to the brotherhood. Violence, which may be considered an extreme tactic to preserve the brotherhood, occurs after the theft by Big Joe of the Pirate's treasure, which is considered sacred by the paisanos. He suffers a savage beating at the hands of the brotherhood after he confesses to stealing money.

> Danny measured his distance carefully, like a golfer addressing the ball. His stick smashed on Big Joe's shoulder; then the friends went about the business in a cold and methodical manner. Jesus Maria took the legs, Danny the shoulders and chest. Big Joe howled and rolled on the floor. They covered his body from the neck down. Each blow found a new space and welted it. The shrieks were deafening. The Pirate stood helplessly by, holding his ax (p. 95).

After giving Big Joe a severe beating, the paisanos further aggrevate the situation by torturing him.

> Then Pilon tore off the blue shirt and exposed the pulpy raw back. With the can-opener he cross-hatched the skin so deftly that a little blood ran from each line. Pablo brought the salt to him to rub it in all over the torn back. At last Danny threw a blanket over the unconscious man.
>
> "I think he will be honest now," said Danny (p. 96).

Hayashi notes that "Violence was a major point of contrast between Danny's group and the Monterey establishment--the physical violence of the paisanos paralleling the exploitative, financially violent tactics of the respectable."[18]

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[18]Hayashi, Study Guide, p. 226.

Despite their adventures, which are in conflict with standards of middle-class America, the paisano brotherhood does complete one act which seemingly would enable them to realize their dream. The most significant move on the part of the paisanos described in Tortilla Flat is their treatment of the Pirate. Fontenrose, at this point, parallels the quest for the Holy Grail and the eventual success of the search with the Pirate's attempt to save enough gold pieces to purchase candlesticks for San Francesco d'Assisi and the brotherhood's desire to preserve this treasure for that purpose.[19] They "for one brief shining moment...grasp the realization that a fully human life involves more than physical security and free self-gratification."[20]

In trying to preserve the gold pieces of the Pirate for the purpose of fulfilling his dream, the paisanos finally act for reasons other than exploitation pointed towards self-interest. They have no desire to swindle portions of it for wine, nor do they attempt to steal with justification (which is so often their mental process) any amount of gold. The one attempt to steal the Pirate's treasure proves to be a contrast in character with Steinbeck's description of the brotherhood. Big Joe has never in the

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[19]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 37.

[20]Hayashi, Study Guide, p. 225.

novel portrayed the sense of unity that the others possess through their fraternity. They must protect the gold at all costs. Inevitably, violence is evidenced when they retaliate mercilessly for the theft of the quarters by Big Joe. Despite constant efforts to exploit each other, they feel a sense of sacredness attached to the Pirate's gold. Logically, the paisanos for and to themselves become benevolent characters who seek only the satisfaction of having done a good deed.

Steinbeck allows his characters to become antitheses of the character traits of their previous treatment throughout the novel. They display benevolence without ulterior motives as they prepare the Pirate for the dedication of the candlesticks.

> I have a coat and vest. Pilon has his father's good hat. You, Danny, have a shirt, and Big Joe has those fine blue pants (p. 97).

The sense of total sacrifice becomes evident in the continued dialogue of the characters:

> "But then we can't go," Pilon protested. "It is not our candlestick, said Jesus Maria. "Father Ramon is not likely to say anything nice about us" (p. 97).

Throughout the incidents of the young corporal, Teresina Cortez, and the Pirate, the paisanos, particularly Danny, experience a short-lived status of total conformity and acceptability in society.

The paisanos' misconstrued, benevolent acts are a partial cause of the defeat of their romantic, idealistic illusions. The conflict between Danny's desire for individuality and his sense for devotion to the brotherhood results in the disbanding of the group and the inevitable destruction of their dream. Danny is committed to the brotherhood so long as there is a central bond between them. The bond is their preservation of the Pirate's treasure and their assistance to the Pirate as he presents his oblation to Father Ramon and the church. This event is climactic for Danny and the fraternity, for it is after the success of the Pirate's venture that Danny begins to struggle again with the burdens of responsibility, a characteristic of the middle-class. "There is no more talisman for Danny then; only the house remains with its fearful pressing upon Danny's shoulders."[21] His desire for independence overcomes his obligation to the brotherhood. That desire becomes evident after the Pirate's quest comes to an end.

Fontenrose again parallels the final days of Danny with those of Lancelot as well as Arthur. In the final scenes of Morte d'Arthur, according to that critic, Arthur

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[21]Arthur F. Kennedy, "The Arthurian Cycle in Tortilla Flat," in Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 145.

becomes an enemy of Lancelot and later leaves England for other battles.[22] The brotherhood too becomes an enemy of Danny, as he leaves his house and goes on a spree of violent acts directed not only at the inhabitants of Tortilla Flat, but also, and more importantly, at the members of his own brotherhood. Pilon and the others of the brotherhood become concerned with reports of Danny's acts. They hear of Danny's exploits with young girls in the woods near Tortilla Flat, his theft of grappa, his destruction of property, and his eventual arrest and escape from jail (pp. 124-126). More serious are his attacks on the house. He takes food, the stove, the Pirate's wheelbarrow, and Pilon's shoes, an act of much more seriousness, as Pilon remarks: "Now he has gone too far...Pranks he has played, and we were patient. But now he turns to crime" (p. 128). The burden of ownership becomes so great that Danny sells the house to Torelli, an Italian who enjoys the privilege of being a businessman, which would thrust him into the middle-class social structure; however, since he is neither Anglo-Saxon nor Protestant, he must be identified with the paisanos of the Flat.[23] The sale of the house is in char-

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[22]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 37.

[23]Metzger, "Mexican-Americans," p. 145.

acter with traditional middle-class virtue; however, that fact does not satisfy his (Danny's) need to be free of the burden. The other paisanos destroy the deed that Torelli has to the house. They do not wish to put an end to the privileges of renting the house, characteristic of middle-class standards.[24]

Upon Danny's return to the house, Pilon and the others notice the loss of the vitality they once knew in Danny. That loss of vitality is indicative both of Danny's attitude toward the group and of his desire to escape the group.

> ...it is not [only] the weight of property [the talismanic bond of the society] [the brotherhood] and the prime symbol of its civilized status, that Danny tried to escape; [but also] it was the "beating of time"...he began to feel--time as a static, cyclic routine that the society had reverted to... .[25]

The inevitable destruction of the group's dreams is synonymous with the death of Danny. Fontenrose's final parallel is with Danny's death. As Arthur returns to England and engage himself in a final assault, so Steinbeck's Danny returns and engages himself in a final assault depicted in the party filled with "roaring battles."[26]

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[24]Paul McCarthy, John Steinbeck (New York: Federick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 45.

[25]Hayashi, Study Guide, p. 229.

[26]Fontenrose, Steinbeck, p. 38.

> Danny, say the people of Tortilla Flat, had been rapidly changing his form. He had grown huge and terrible. His eyes flared like the headlights of an automobile. There was something fearsome about him. There he stood, in the room of his own house. He held the pine table-leg in his right hand, and even it had grown; Danny challenged the world (p. 143).

Having prevailed over the paisanos at the party, Danny challenges "The One who <u>can</u> fight (p. 143)." However, "The Enemy" emerges victorious, as Danny falls to his death at the edge of a canyon. The majesty and mystery surrounding his death remained long after in the minds of the paisanos.

> Outside the house they heard his roaring challenge. They heard the table-leg whistle like a meteor through the air. They heard his footsteps charging down the yard. And then, behind the house, in the gulch, they heard an answering challenge so fearful and so chill that their spines wilted like nasturtium stems under frost. Even now, when the people speak of Danny's opponent, they lower their voices and look furtively about. They heard Danny charge to the fray. They heard his last shrill cry of defiance, and then a thump. And then silence (p. 144).

As Danny's funeral approaches, the burdens of middle-class values are once again thrust upon the members of the brotherhood, since they are unable to attend the funeral rites, unlike many other paisanos in the Flat. Again, those inherent qualities which make them "dropouts" from society prevent their functioning in rituals characteristic of the American middle class.

> Once again they are sympathetic rogues, amusing social parasites who plan to show in their own way respect for their departed leader. Middle-class conventions constrain them, however. "Imagine going to a funeral without first polishing the automobile. Imagine standing at a graveside not dressed in your best dark suit." Danny's friends have no cars and no suits, new or second-hand. There is no time to steal suits, and who at such a time has a suit to lend? They must go as they are.[27]

The paisanos have to settle for viewing the funeral rites from the streets and observing the burial from a grassy area near the cemetery. However, they hold a rather elaborate ceremony which becomes symbolic of their life with Danny within the brotherhood and symbolic of their lives after the death of their leader. One last party is held in the home that belonged to their leader.

> Ceremoniously they filled the fruit jars and drank...Each man, as he sipped his wine, roved through the past...The friends lighted the cigars and spat...Pablo tried a few notes of the song "Tuli Pan"...[Pilon] lighted his cigar and flipped the match (p. 150).

The final ritual signifies the end of the brotherhood and the end of the dream.

> The little burning stick landed on the old newspaper against the wall. Each man started up to stamp it out; and each man was struck with a celestial thought, and settled back. They found one another's eyes and smiled the wise smiles of the deathless and hopeless ones...In a reverie they watch the flame flicker and nearly die, and

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[27]McCarthy, Steinbeck, p. 45.

> spout to life again. They saw it bloom on the paper. Thus do the gods speak with tiny causes. And the men smiled on as the paper burned and the dry wooden wall caught.
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> Thus must it be, O wise friends of Danny. The cord that bound you together is cut. The magnet that drew you has lost its virtue. Some stranger will own the house, some joyless relative of Danny's. Better that this symbol of holy friendship, this good house of parties, and fights, of love and comfort, should die as Danny died, in one last glorious, hopeless assault on the gods.
>
> They sat and smiled. And the flame climbed like a snake to the ceiling and broke through the roof and roared. Only then did the friends get up from their chairs and walk like dreaming men out of the door...
>
> Among the crowding people of Tortilla Flat, Danny's friends stood entranced and watched until at last the house was a mound of black, steaming cinders, Then the fire trucks turned and coasted away down the hill.
>
> The people of the Flat melted into the darkness. Danny's friends still stood looking at the smoking ruin. They looked at one another strangely, and then back to the burned house. And after a while they turned and walked slowly away, and no two walked together (pp. 150-151).

The act itself is again in conflict with the established social structure. The paisanos have destroyed property. However, their rationale is in keeping with their idealistic nature as depicted throughout the novel. They do not want strangers to inhabit what they consider sacred.

For Danny and his band of paisanos, being devoid of the qualities of middle-class society themselves, shatter

their illusions of existing in that society. Their ethics, which include a carefree lifestyle, a disinclination to work, a high consumption of alcohol, theft and misguided benevolence, prove detrimental to their continued existence where "potential for moral and social growth" must be preserved in a social unit.[28]

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[28]Hayashi, Study Guide, pp. 228-229.

CHAPTER TWO

OF MICE AND MEN -- THE DESTRUCTION OF REALISTIC DREAMS

"The best - laid schemes o'mice an' men
Gang aft a-glay."

Warren French in his essay, "End of a Dream," states that Robert Burns' verse describes the intent of Mice and Men, which concerns itself with dreams which are valid for mankind but, inevitably, are destroyed. That verse from Burns' "To a Mouse" which provided Steinbeck with the title of this short novel and play explicitly reveals the theme set forth by the author. An analogy is made between Burns' consideration of a field mouse and its fateful encounter with a farmer's plow and Steinbeck's laborers in a more ominous situation evoking the human condition. In the novel, according to French, "Man is at the mercy of forces he cannot control which ruthlessly but indifferently destroy the illusions he has manufactured."[1] To understand how these forces destroy the illusion, one must consider first the establishment of the realistic dream, after which one can see how the forces beyond the control of the protagonists cause the destruction of the dream.

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[1]Warren French, "End of a Dream," in Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 65.

In Steinbeck's novel George Milton and Lennie Small, unlike Danny and the paisanos of Tortilla Flat, have unromantic, unidealistic desires for existence with the social unit. Their desire to own a small piece of land and to farm the land themselves is based on the supposition that all men inherently seek goals, though they may be modest and unassuming.[2] Such is the case of these "bindlestiffs," who have received work orders to report to a ranch near Soledad in the Salinas Valley. For the two the positions are temporary, since they share the dream of eventually purchasing a small farm when enough money can be saved. What makes this dream realistic is its essentials, according to Paul McCarthy in "Conflicts and Searches in the 1930's". The essentials of the dream include first the friendship that has been established, both through years of togetherness and through basic needs of each of the characters, and, secondly, the chance to overcome the many obstacles that might inhibit the realization of the dream.[3]

Steinbeck's characters, in reality, through many years of association have become dependent upon each other.

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[2]Tetsumaro Hayashi, A Study Guide to Steinbeck (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1974), p. 137.

[3]Paul McCarthy, John Steinbeck (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 59.

Lennie Small, as indicated in the novel, has a handicap, and he has in effect become dependent upon George for protection and guidance. Steinbeck notes:

> "Lennie," he said sharply. "Lennie, for God's sakes don't drink so much." Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. "Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last..."[4]

Severe mental retardation in Lennie, as indicated by Steinbeck, becomes representative of mankind. The author's intent, as noted by Lisca, is that Lennie be symbolic of "the earth longings of a Lennie who is not to be representative of insanity at all [but to represent] the inarticulate and powerful yearnings of all men."[5] Man often seeks understanding even despite an inability to be understood in a world characterized by chaotic forces that prevent such interaction.

The dependence of Lennie on George is rather obvious; however, what is to be noted is the dependence of George on Lennie. George, through his friend, fulfills a normal need for a feeling of superiority as well as for a justification for failures in his own life.[6] George often complains of his predicament of having to watch over Lennie:

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[4]John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men (New York: Bantam Books), p. 3.

[5]Peter Lisca, The Wide World of John Steinbeck (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1958), p. 134.

[6]McCarthy, Steinbeck, p. 59.

> God a'mighty, if I as alone I could live so easy. I could get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. Why, I could stay at a cat house all night. I could eat any place I want, hotel or any place, and order any damn thing I could think of. An' I could do all that every damn month. Get a gallon of whiskey, or set in a pool room and play or shoot pool" (p. 12).

His complaining not only alleviates the tedium of life for George, but also creates in his character a sense of aggression that is nevertheless accompanied by guilt. Lisca again points out that "George not only protects but directs Lennie."[7] He states the following of George and Lennie:

> Lennie doesn't speak unless George permits him to; and, in the fight in which Curley's hand is broken, Lennie refuses even to defend himself until George tells him to. George, of course directs Lennie partly to protect him from committing acts he could not mentally be responsible for, but George is not a wholly altruistic shepherd. Another aspect of the relationship becomes apparent when George tells Slim that Lennie "Can't think of nothing to do himself, but he sure can take orders;" Lennie gives him a sense of power.[8]

In Lisca's "Escape and Commitment: Two Poles of the Steinbeck Hero," the critic further adds to the rationale of

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[7]French, Critical Essays, p. 66.

[8]Ibid.

George's dependence on Lennie. On one hand he states, "by concentrating on George and reading Lennie as a symbol of proletarian man, great in strength but helpless without leadership, the theme of commitment could be seen in George's sacrifices and devotion to Lennie;" on an alternate level, "Lennie is necessary to George as an excuse for his own failures."[9] George's outlook in regard to his own life manifests the failures in that life. George comments: "I ain't so bright neither, or I would't be buckn' barley for my fifty and found. If I was even a little bit smart, I'd have my own little place..."(p. 43).

The second essential of the dream which makes it realistic is the remote possibility of overcoming the obstacles of the dream. As indicated in the novel, George has genuine intellectual ability, as well as farming experience. His physical appearence suggests his capabilities. Steinbeck indicates this early in the novel: "The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was well defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose" (p. 2). Lennie, on the other hand, possesses the strength

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[9]Peter Lisca, "Escape and Commitment," in Steinbeck: The Man and His Works, ed. Richard Astro and Tetsumaro Hayashi (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1971), p. 82.

needed to do the type of work needed to maintain a farm. Again, Steinbeck suggests strength in the appearance of Lennie, "Behind him [George] walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders..."(p. 12). Besides intelligence and strength needed to manage a farm, a third potential for realizing their dream is the actual existence of the farm. According to McCarthy in "Conflicts and Searches," George's vivid recollections of the farm, as he recites its description in a ritualistic manner, makes the dream a reality.

> "Well, It's ten acres...Got a little win'mill. Got a little shack on it, an' a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard, cherries, apples, peaches, 'cots, nuts, got a few berries, They's a place for alfalfa and plenty of water to flood it. They's a pig pen."
>
> "An' rabbits, George."
>
> "No place for rabbits now, but I could easy build a few hutches and you could feed alfalfa to the rabbits" (p. 15).

The ritual continues, as they tell each other the story of the dream:

> George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically, as though he had said them many times before. "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch and work and then go into town and blow their stakes, and you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to...With us it ain't like that. We got a future...We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us." [Lennie continues]..."because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you and that's why" (p. 15).

Their dream sets them apart from all other laborers who have yet to realize desirable goals. Although the idea of being different from other laborers is meaningless to Lennie, it provides a type of consolation for George.[10] French indicates that George then "becomes entranced with his own picture of the simple pastoral life, with each doing his part and all of them living, as Lennie says 'off the fatta the lan'.'"[11]

The last possibility of overcoming any obstacles that may prevent the realization of the dream is the addition of one other character and his resources to the goal of the two characters with the acceptance of Candy's $300 to send to the owners to bind the deal. The old swamper befriends the two, and later offers his savings--money that was given to him as a result of the accident which left him with one hand. Steinbeck describes these characters as their dream seemingly becomes reality:

> "Tha's three hundred, and I got fifty more comin' the end of the month. Tell you what--" He leaned forward eagerly. "S'pose I went in with you guys. Tha's three hundred an' fifty bucks I'd put in. I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some..." They fell into a silence. They looked at one another, amazed. This thing they had never really

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[10]McCarthy, Steinbeck, p. 60.

[11]French, Critical Essays, p. 66.

> believed in was coming true. George said reverently, "Jesus Christ. I bet we could swing her." His eyes were full of wonder. "I bet we could swing her," he repeated softly (pp. 65-66).

Despite such potentialities for the realization of goals, the inevitable destruction must occur. Steinbeck's non-teleological treatment becomes apparent in his concern, according to Marks, "not with the why but with the what and how of the individual's illusions," as indicated in his original title for this novel, "Something That Happened."[12] The title indicates a rather dispassionate view of the fortunes turned into misfortunes in the lives of Lennie and George. Marks further explains:

> George and Lennie...like the mouse [in Burns' "To a Mouse"] are frustrated in their plans by the nature of things, by "something that happened." Since we can never track down the cause of life's ironies, both Steinbeck and Burns are saying, we had best accept them for what they are--conditions of human existence.[13]

Those "things that happened," over which the protagonists have no control, cannot be explained but, ironically, occur and result in ill-fated dreams. First is the predilection for accidental violence in the character Lennie. The inevitable destruction of Lennie and the dream is for-

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[12]Lester J. Marks, Thematic Design of the Novels of John Steinbeck (Mouton: The Hague, 1969), p. 59.

[13]Ibid., p. 60.

shadowed early in the novel in the incident in the town of Weed, where Lennie, as a result of his tendency towards violent acts, frightens a young girl by holding her dress. Misunderstanding Lennie's intentions ("Jus' wanted to feel that girl's dress--jus' wanted to pet it like it was a mouse..." (p. 12)), the girl screams, thus sending the townspeople searching for both Lennie and George. Lennie's tendency towards unpremeditated violence is further noted in the destruction of a mouse that he had just wanted to pet. As Lennie indicates, "I wasn't doin' nothing bad with it, George. Jus' strokin' it" (p. 9). George admonishes him, saying, "That mouse ain't fresh, Lennie; and besides, you've broke it pettin' it. You get another mouse that's fresh and I'll let you keep it a little while" (p. 10). Again Steinbeck foreshadows impending and inevitable destruction by creating a motif of unintentionally violent acts in both the Weed incident involving the girl and the later incident involving the mouse. As the novel progresses the acts become more severe, thus culminating in the death of Curley's wife.

Steinbeck, along with his depiction of a character who is prone to violence, allows the character Lennie, who is also symbolic of the "handicapped of the migrant world," to exist in a constant conflict with others who are in effect

impaired and also rejected by society. Such characters, according to McCarthy, are destined for failure not only because of a non-teleological view which pits them against a world which lies beyond any distinctions of that which is moral or immoral, but also against a society which cannot tolerate their inabilities to function within its unit.[14] Steinbeck's introduction of Curley establishes a part of the major conflict, as Curley becomes a threat to Lennie's normal existence in society. Curley has the potential to entrap both Lennie and George in situations that may prove to be violent. The character's explosive nature, compounded by his self-consciousness concerning his size and his jealousy, which gives him an extremely possessive attitude towards his wife, who gradually rebels against him, does become the catalyst for the conflict with Curley. Curley, who is rejected by society, has a need to exert his power over others. Steinbeck allows the swamper to describe Curley as being potentially dangerous:

> The old man looked cautiously at the door to make sure no one was listening. "That's the boss's son," he said quietly. "Curley's pretty handy. He done quite a bit in the ring. He's a lightweight, and he's handy..."
>
> "Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's alla time picking scraps

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[14]McCarthy, Steinbeck, p. 60.

> with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain't you? Always scrappy?" (p. 27).

The violent contact between Curley and Lennie is a result of Curley's need to exert his power over the larger, cowardly Lennie. Not only does Curley respond to others in an objectionable manner, but his personal habits have become repulsive; according to the swamper, he wears "that glove fulla vaseline [because] he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife" (p. 30).

As Steinbeck describes the initial encounter with Curley's wife, he establishes the second part of the conflict which results in his destruction of Lennie and the dream. Curley's wife (atypically Steinbeck refers to her throughout only as Curley's wife) is another of the "handicapped" of society, as she is objectionable, particularly to George, in her manner and appearance. She has become a misfit in society owing to her limitations as Curley's wife and her unfulfilled desire to be in the movies. Steinbeck through her portrays another character who has dreams that have become shattered by fate. After her visions of stardom fade before her, she resolves to marry Curley merely as an escape from an oppressive lifestyle imposed on her by her mother. She later confides in Lennie, as she tells him that she has no feelings for her husband. In an earlier

scene George complains, "Jesus, what a tramp...she's a rat-trap if I ever seen one" (pp. 35-36). Here Steinbeck characterizes Curley's wife as one who can also entrap Lennie and George. The author's description of her adds to the symbolic "rat-trap" effect established earlier through Burns' poem, as she appeals only to Lennie. Steinbeck describes her:

> A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers...Her voice had a nasal, brittle quality (p. 34).

Her manner too proves to be a major factor, as she moves in a fashion that is designed to lure men. According to the author, "...she bridled a little. She looked at her fingernails...She smiled archly and twitched her body" (pp. 34-35). Steinbeck allows only Lennie to respond to her in a positive manner, as "Lennie's eyes moved down over her body..." (p. 34), and he states in an assertive manner, "She's purty..." (p. 34). Thus Steinbeck has produced the potential for controversy, as one notes through his established foreshadowing of her actions through previous incidents.

Steinbeck uses other incidents to add to the increasingly likeliness of violence through other so-called "han-

dicapped" members of society. Through the actions of Candy, Steinbeck not only heightens the idea of entrapment, but also establishes initial lines of parallelism which foreshadow Lennie's inevitable death. Candy is characterized in the novel as the "old swamper," one whose duties are menial and less desirable. He performs these tasks as a result of an accident which has left him with only his left hand. Steinbeck uses the incident involving the swamper's dog as being totally objectionable:

> That dog of Candy's is so God-damn old he can't hardly walk. Stinks like hell, too. Ever' time he comes into the bunk house I [Carlson] can smell him two, three days (p. 39).

Carlson strongly appeals to Candy to destroy what he considers a menace to the dog himself and to the other men in the bunk house. He states:

> "Got no teeth," he said. "He's all stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good to you, Candy. An' he ain't no good to himself. Why'n't you shoot him, Candy?" (p. 49).

The animal is eventually destroyed, as Candy reluctantly agrees to have him shot after the strong suggestion of Slim, the one character who has the respect of every ranch hand, including the boss' son Curley. Steinbeck's description of Slim suggests a man of authority and intellection:

> A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room and he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought (p. 37).

Steinbeck's man of authority cannot be denied by Candy or any other hand, for as Candy notes, "Slim's opinions were law" (p. 50). The author also portrays Slim as one who is by his nature cognizant of human frailties, as opposed to the uncaring nature of Carlson (Carlson also destroys the dog), who represents the insensitivity of society.[15] That incident allows Steinbeck to foreshadow the events that will result in Lennie's death. Like the dog, Lennie will become totally objectionable to the society, and he will have to be destroyed reluctantly by George, who will in

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[15]French, Essays, p. 68.

turn be comforted by the discerning words of the skinner Slim.

Steinbeck continues his portrayal of controversies between those who are encumbrances in society in the explosive encounter of Curley and Lennie. The incident begins as an argument between Slim and Curley about the location of Curley's wife. Steinbeck implies that Slim has a feeling of contempt for Curley and that this feeling has been aggravated by Curley's continual insinuations about his wife and Slim. What begins as idle threats made by Curley to the other hands ends in an executed threat directed at Lennie, who is totally innocent of any response to Curley's actions. As a result of Lennie's strength, Curley's fist is crushed. Steinbeck again shows Lennie's unintentionally violent tendencies as a result of his fear of Curley's attack on him. Lennie does not defend himself until he is directed by George to do so.

Steinbeck further focuses on all those characters who represent rejections of society in his portrayal of the discussion in Crooks' room. Crooks, also a "handicapped" member of the ranch-community, is a Negro who is the stable boy on the ranch. Crooks not only has a physical handicap, a painfully crooked back, but also suffers the social handicap of being black. As a result, he remains distant from

the other ranch hands and becomes suspicious when he is approached by any of them. On one occasion Lennie ambles into the harness room where Crooks resides and begins a conversation, which later includes Candy, wherein they discuss the dream shared by George, Lennie and Candy. Steinbeck intensifies this scene by the intrusion of Curley's wife. Here again, she becomes representative of the "rat-trap" which George earlier implies in his reference to her. When Crooks objects to her presence, she explodes, "Listen, Nigger...You know what I can do if you open your trap?" (p. 88) Here Steinbeck alludes to the confining nature of discrimination, particularly during the latter portion of the 1930's. Such a reference to the "trap" enhances the plight of Lennie, entrapped in a society in which he can never function.

The motif of controversy continues, as Steinbeck describes the unintentional strangling of the tiny puppy. Lennie has been given the privilege of attending to the mother and her newborn litter. However, as a result of Lennie's uncontrollable strength he destroys the animal that he has admired. Steinbeck indicates the following:

> Lennie sat in the hay and looked at the little dead puppy that lay in front of him. Lennie looked at it for a long time, and then he put out his huge hand and stroked it, stroked it clear from one end to another. And Lennie said

> softly to the puppy, "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard" (pp. 92-93).

The climax of that series of fateful murders occurs with the death of Curley's wife. Again, an unintentional, unpremeditated killing at the hands of Lennie destroys any hope of attaining the long-awaited dream. As French notes, the event becomes a manifestation of Steinbeck's treatment of characters in a naturalistic manner. As in Stephen Crane's "Open Boat," Lennie has become an example of "outraged compassion for the victims of chaotic forces."[16] Lennie begins to stroke Curley's wife's hair, as she instructs him to "Feel right aroun' there an' see how soft it is" (p. 99). However, like the girl in Weed, Curley's wife "jerked her head sideways, and Lennie's fingers closed on her hair and hung on" (p. 99). For fear of reprisal from George, Lennie attempts to muffle the screams of the young woman. Steinbeck describes the scene as follows:

> She struggled violently under his hands. Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie's hand came a muffled screaming. Lennie began to cry with fright ...He moved his hand a little and her hoarse cry came out. Then Lennie grew angry...and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck (pp. 99-100).

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[16]French, Essays, p. 65.

The final condemnation of the dream becomes apparent when George realizes, through Candy's supplications, that neither Curley nor the other ranch hands will allow Lennie to live. Steinbeck indicates that all hope for realization of the American dream has ended:

> Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. "You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?"
>
> Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew. George said softly, "I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would" (p. 103).

As George makes the decision to kill Lennie, he not only saves Lennie from the angry mob that searches for him, but also kills a part of himself. He kills any hope of farming the little piece of land; he kills a part of the hope of attaining his dream. In placing George in this situation, Steinbeck creates in George a tragic hero in a rather unromantic setting, unlike the Hegelian tragic hero, who, as noted in Hegel and Tragedy, is placed in situations and forced to act in situations that are beyond his control; however, the Hegelian situations provide for alternatives of good rather than of good and evil, which is characteristic of the hero of twentieth-century literature. For Hegel the modern hero of his epoch does not act on the essence of

the situation, which is the factor that arouses his emotions; instead he acts on the need to satisfy the essential character of his nature. For Hegel the essentials of his character are qualities not of right and wrong nor of vice and virtue, but of elements that lead him closer to a supreme or complete virtue.[17] The situations of the man of the Hegelian epoch would provide the modern tragic hero with alternatives not of right and wrong, or vice and virtue, but with choices between degrees of right. According to Hegel and his doctrines of Christianity, man, through his inherent qualities, particularly his will, makes deliberate choices. Hegel believes that these choices are brought about through the existence of vice; however, he sees man's choice of evil as a step towards virtue.[18] George does not have the choice of acceptable alternatives which according to Hegel would be allowed the hero of his age. In an even harsher age, the period following the Depression, there is not the choice between two goods indicated by Hegel. George becomes then a rather unromantic hero in an industrialized society characterized by gross insensitivity toward men. His decision to kill Lennie is based on the inevitable. He chooses

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[17]Anne and Henry Paolucci, Hegel on Tradegy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962), p. 84.

[18]John McTaggart and Ellis McTaggart, M.A., Studies in Hegelian Cosmology (Cambridge, MA: The University Press, 1901), p. 234.

to kill Lennie rather than to allow the other hands to do so. It is not a choice of life or death for Lennie, rather the choice of the type of execution for this misfit within society.

Thus Steinbeck's tragedy, in a society which is characteristic of faults that accompany industrial advancement, depicts characters who also possess faults, not as a result of personality, but as a result of external conflicts beyond their control. Characters such as Lennie Small and George Milton become victims rather than perpetrators of crime in that society, as they strive to become functional parts of it. Those characters, therefore, become a part of what the critic Burton Rascoe in "John Steinbeck," classifies as continuous recurrence of "the never quite-realized, too often tragically shattered dreams of men toward an ideal future of security, tranquility, ease and contentment... ."[19]

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[19]Burton Rascoe, "John Steinbeck," in Steinbeck and His Critics, comp. E. W. Tedlock, Jr. and C. V. Wicker (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957), p. 61.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GRAPES OF WRATH -- DESTRUCTION OF VALID AND ESSENTIAL DREAMS

The Grapes of Wrath is Steinbeck's depiction of farmers who have experienced some realization of the American dream; however, as a result of external forces, they lose sight of the dream and seek to regain it. The external forces of nature, society and man not only destroy the dream, but also annihilate the characters' ability to function within the conventional social structure. The Joad family experiences both an economic decline and a decline in morale, as well as the physical declination of the family unit.[1] Peter Lisca notes, however, that with the "downward movement" of the characters there is actually an optimistic view that results from the degradation of the family. He also notes that accompanying the continual destruction of the family unit there is a "sense of the communal unit [which] grows steadily through the narrative... ."[2] In examining the

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[1]Peter Lisca, The Wide World of Steinbeck (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1958), pp. 171-172.

[2]Ibid., p. 172.

theme of declination, nevertheless, the reader can see how the realization of the American dream becomes void.

To establish the need for hope for a new life, the dream, Steinbeck creates the economic fall of the Joad family. The dreamers of this novel are migrants who have become displaced. As discussed in "Who Were the 'Okies'?", unlike the "habitual migrant" (exemplified by George Milton and Lennie Small), who seems to be destined to move from job to job until he is unable to work, the removal migrants "have been forced into migratory life by dispossession from land or job; most of them are family units, and nearly all of them would settle permanently if they could."[3]

This is descriptive of the Joads of Steinbeck's novel. Again, the parallels are made between the Joads of the novel and the migrants of America during the period of history encompassing the Depression. "The causes of their distress are embedded deep in the whole tragic history of American agriculture, dating from the earliest misuse of the soil...[also] land speculation, recurrent depression and droughts, reduction of industrial outlets to surplus farm population, power farming, soil erosion, all leading

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[3]Warren French, ed., A Companion to The Grapes of Wrath (New York: The Viking Press, 1953), pp. 33-34.

to the climax of the disastrous droughts and dust storms of the 1930's."[4] The Joad family and many others in the novel have been thrust unwillingly into the life of an itinerant worker, searching for what promises to be a better life in California. Like many others in Oklahoma and other southwestern states, the Joads have lost their land and their farm as a result of drought, bank foreclosures, the forced collection of debts and other effects of the Depression. They, like many others, spend months on the great highway, Route 66, which takes them through several states en route to what they hope will be stable work which will enable them to purchase land again and to settle permanently.

With the decline of economic resources comes a continuous decline in the morale of the Joad family as well as a decline in the morality of the family, as established by the society described in the novel. The Joads experience a steady decline in morale as they have to fight the stereotypes established by the California growers. In the article entitled, "Who Were the 'Okies'?" the relationship between the growers, and the workers, particularly those who had immigrated from the midwest, is seen as severely strained because of the attitudes of the growers.

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[4]French, Companion, pp. 33-34.

> They [the immigrants] were failures where they lived, and they came because our California's growers' relief payments are about the biggest in the country. Most of them aren't the kind of people who make good citizens. They're naturally dirty, ignorant, immoral, and superstitious. If you do anything for them, they don't appreciate it, and if you let them on your ground they dirty it up and destroy property--they're used to living like trash. They've been inbreeding for so long that they're low-grade stock. After they've been here a year or two and learned how to handle our crops, they make good workers, maybe the best we've ever had, but you can't depend on them. They're too damned independent... .[5]

The Joads initially are independent workers; however, the battle against the stereotypes imposed on them prove to be a diminishing factor in the character of the family. The first evidence of this decline appears in the grandfather of the Joad family. As indicated earlier, one method of removing the family from its land was eviction. Such was the case of the Joads. Once a strong, independent worker, Grampa has become reduced to a picker dependent on meager wages earned in the cotton fields. Muley Graves indicates the change in Grampa:

> "Well, they was gonna stick her out when the bank come to tractorin' off the place. Your grampa stood out here with a rifle, an' he blowed the headlights off the cat; but she come on just the same. Your grampa didn't wanta kill the guy drivin' that cat; an' that was Willy Feely, an' Willy knowed it, so he jus' come on, an' bumped the hell outa the house, and give her a shake

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[5]French, Companion, pp. 33-34.

> like a dog shakes a rat. Well, it took sompin outa Tom. Kinda got into 'im. He ain't been the same ever since."[6]

Further evidence of decline in the character of Grampa is indicated when he refuses to leave him home as the Joads prepare to start their journey to California. Having drugged his coffee, Tom and others lift the sleeping Grampa onto the truck as they begin the journey to Highway 66, the main route westward.

A sharp physical decline, as well as a decline in morale, becomes apparent in Grampa. A first evidence of his physical decline is crying which, as Uncle John indicated, is not typical of Grampa's behavior.

> Uncle John said, "He must be good an' sick. He ain't never done that before. Never seen him blubberin' in my life" (p. 48).

Casy further notices the seriousness of Grampa's condition:

> Casy took the skinny old wrist in his fingers. "Feeling kinda tired, Grampa?" he asked. The staring eyes moved toward his voice but did not find him. The lips practiced a speech but did not speak it. Casy felt the pulse and he dropped the wrist and put his hand on Grampa's forehead. A struggle began in the old man's body, his legs moved restlessly and his hands stirred. He said a whole string of blurred sounds that were not words, and his face was red under the spiky white whiskers (p. 148).

A simultaneous decline in character and health results in the death of Grampa. The eventual death of Grampa marks the beginning of the declination of character for the

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[6]John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York: Penguin Books, 1939), p. 48.

family, the emergence of pragmatic attitudes, and a declination of the Joad family unit, a factor which is detrimental to the survival of their dream. However, with the decline comes a sense of communal awareness which sustains itself throughout the novel, coinciding with the continuous hope of the American dream.

The initial breakdown of the family unit, occurring with the death of one of its members, is marked as Grampa ceases to be "titular head." His position at the family discussion was, as Steinbeck states, "honorary and a matter of custom. But he did have the right of first comment, no matter how silly his old mind might be. And the squatting men and the standing women waited for him" (p. 110). The sense of community becomes apparent as Casy is accepted into the family unit.

> Casy got to his feet. He knew the government of families, and he knew he had been taken into the family. Indeed his position was eminent, for Uncle John moved sideways, leaving a space between Pa and himself for the preacher. Casy squatted down like the others, facing Grampa enthroned on the running board (p. 112).

Not only does Casy become a part of the family unit, but the Wilsons too become members, as they are aided by the Joad family and as they become aids to the family. The Joads use the Wilson's blanket as a burial shroud for Grampa; Sarah, or Sairy, Wilson aids Ma by preparing sup-

per while Ma prepares Grampa for burial. Tom Wilson aids both in the digging of the grave and by offering sound advice about the way the grandfather is buried; young Al fixes the Wilson's car. The acceptance becomes official as Tom Wilson, like Casy earlier, is summoned to the family organization.

> Pa called, "Mr. Wilson." The man scuffed near and squatted down, and Sairy came and stood beside him. Pa said, "We're thankful to you folks" (p. 152).

Such acceptance marks the beginning of a relationship which lasts through numerous hardships on the journey to California.

The third incident of the breakdown of the family unit occurs with the death of Granma. The death of her husband and the increasingly oppressive conditions combine to make her succumb to death. That yielding becomes apparent as the family crosses over into California at a temporary campsite.

> Granma kicked the curtain off her legs, which lay like gray, knotted sticks. And Granma whined with the whining in the distance. Ma pulled the curtain back in place. And then Granma sighed deeply and her breathing grew steady and easy, and her closed eyelids ceased their flicking. She slept deeply, and snored through her half-opened mouth. The whining from the distance was softer and softer until it could not be heard at all anymore (p. 233).

Ma Joad conceals the death of the grandmother until the family reaches Tehachapi, knowing the consequences of this knowledge to the rest of family. The continuous breakdown of the family unit here coincides with the breakdown of morality in terms of American middle-class society.

The family unit is not only dissolved because of the deaths of various members, but also is dissolved by desertion as a result of the lack of any clear realization of the dream. Steinbeck's character Noah deserts just before crossing into California. His character, reminiscent of Lennie Small's, foreshadows the family's inevitable departure. Like Lennie, Noah is an aberration that cannot and will not be tolerated by middle-class society. Steinbeck describes him as:

> ...tall and strange, walking always with a wondering look on his face, calm and puzzled. He had never been angry in his life. He looked in wonder at angry people, wonder and uneasiness, as normal people look at the insane. Noah moved slowly, spoke seldom, and then so slowly that people who did not know him often thought him stupid. He was not stupid, but he was strange (p. 84).

With the realization that he would never be a part of the dream, Noah deserts to lead what he believes to be a calm, quiet, secure life by the river. He states:

> "No. It ain't no use. I was in that there water an' I ain't a-gonna leave her. I'm a-gonna go now, Tom--down the river. I'll catch fish an' stuff, but I can't leave her. I can't" (p. 229).

The Wilsons, who have become family members by intimate association, also desert the Joads. Tom Wilson refuses to depart with the Joads after they have been ordered by California police to disband a camp established just inside the California state line in the desert. Sairy, who in fact has cancer, can no longer travel, and she refuses to disclose the truth of her illness to her husband. She does, however, tell Casy, who says a prayer for her, that she is aware of her terminal condition:

> She shook her head slowly from side to side. "I'm jus' pain covered with skin. I know what it is, but I won't tell him. He'd be too sad. He wouldn' know what to do anyways. Maybe in the night, when he's a-sleepin', when he waked up, it won't be so bad" (p. 240).

She is dying, and, like many of the migrants, she does not have access to the medical care that is needed. Wilson informs the Joads that he will remain at the camp, risking a possible arrest. Reluctantly the Joads depart, leaving the Wilsons a small amount of food and money.

Connie Rivers, after he can no longer cope with the hardships of the journey, deserts Rose of Sharon. Steinbeck foreshadows his desertion of Rose of Sharon when he notes earlier in the novel that Connie desired to remain in Oklahoma rather than face the long journey. Steinbeck also allows Connie to become more and more isolated from the

family, and the young man has very little to say. Finally, his desire to get a radio job signals that he will soon desert his wife and their expected child. As indicated by Rose of Sharon, Connie had dreams that had been destroyed, and he had come to realize the impossibility of his dream. She comments after his departure:

> "Said it would a been a good thing if he stayed home an' studied up tractors" (p. 301).

That activity would have provided a secure source of income after the banks and financial institutions had caused dispossession of the land. As a result of his desertion, Rose of Sharon suffers a continuous decline in morale. Her great despondency upon Connie's departure, coupled with the extreme hardships of the journey, her being overworked and exhausted, and lack of prenatal care, will eventually result in a still-born child.

Along with the theme of the dissolution of the family as a factor in its not being able to realize the dream, Steinbeck also utilizes the theme of communal awareness in the novel. The Joads have already expressed this Transcendental idea in their aid to the Wilsons. However, in a closer study of the philosophy which embodies this social awareness, Steinbeck further emphasizes the theme of disillusionment as a result of the Joads' attempt to achieve

middle-class values. Frederick Ives Carpenter, throughout his comprehensive discussion of The Grapes of Wrath and its Transcendental message, shows in his article, "The Philosophical Joads," how the family achieves and displays the ideals of social awareness:

> ...It begins with the Transcendental Oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man, and his Protestant self-reliance. To this he joins Whitman's religion of the love of all men and his mass democracy. And it combines these mystical and poetic ideas with the realistic philosophy of pragmatism and its emphasis on effective action. From this it develops a new kind of Christianity --not otherworldly and passive, but earthly and active.[7]

First the Joads and other characters of the novel display the Transcendental ideal with emphasizes man's faith in himself and his fellowman. The Emersonian concept of the Oversoul is reflected in Steinbeck's depiction of this family. Emerson's concern for one's own soul becomes evident in Steinbeck's concern for the souls of others. The Joads manifest such qualities as J. Paul Hunter describes: "Under the old order in Oklahoma, the Joads were a proud people, individualists who asked nothing from anyone and who were content with their family-size world as long as they had a home surrounded by land which

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[7]Frederick Ives Carpenter, "The Philosophical Joads," College English, 2 (January 1941): 324-325.

they could caress into fertility."[8] The Joads, like Emerson in their philosophy, believe in one's own ability and rely on instinctive qualities for direction in living. After becoming dispossessed, they remain resolute, a quality admired by Steinbeck as he praises Tom Joad, an expert mechanic who is able to drive the family's broken-down, makeshift truck from Oklahoma to California. Steinbeck also admires the efficiency of this character and others of the novel in their ability to transform what seem to be impossible situations into workable solutions.[9] Critics note that the novel in fact "traces the transformation of the Protestant individual into the member of a social group--the old 'I' becomes 'we'."[10] That Protestant individualism is evident in the Joad family before they become dispossessed. They are proud, independent farmers whose world consists of the family, determinedly sharing responsibility for its own property. They are nonetheless existing in a individual world on their own land, with no idea of interaction outside the limits of their region. Stein-

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[8]Paul Hunter, "Steinbeck's Wine of Affirmation," in Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Grapes of Wrath, ed. Robert Con David (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), p. 38.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Lincoln R. Gibbs, "John Steinbeck: Moralist," Antioch Review 2 (Summer 1942): 181.

beck continues to develop the novel, now based on concepts of Walt Whitman, with the change in circumstances of the Joads and other migrants. In Whitman's "Song of Myself," he notes, "One's self, I sing, a simple separate person,/ Yet utter the world Democratic, the world En Masse."[11] Whitman praises individualism, but he emphatically includes that individual in his relationship to the group. Steinbeck, through numerous actions of the migrants in the novel, moves from individualism to social integration as a means of achieving the desired dream.

As indicated in "The Philosophical Joads:"

> This is the beginning [Steinbeck writes] from "I" to "we". This is the beginning, that is, of construction. When the old society has been split and the Protestant individuals wander aimlessly about, some new nucleus must be found, or chaos and nihilism will follow. "In the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and the tents come out. The two men squat on their hams and the women and children listen. Here is the note." Here is the new nucleus. And from the first "we" there grows a still more dangerous thing: "I have a little food," plus "I have none." If from this problem the sum is "We have a little food," the thing is on its way, the movement has direction. A new social group is forming, based on the word "en masse."[12]

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[11]Carpenter, "Philosophical Joads," p. 318.

[12]Ibid., p. 319.

Steinbeck, therefore, through his characters, shows how the family emerges from people with individualistic concerns to those who display through their actions the concept of communal awareness. The children, Ruthie and Winfield, throughout the journey show signs of selfishness. Ruthie particularly demonstrates the individualistic "I" in her attempt to play croquet alone after refusing to adhere to the rules of sharing with the other children at Weedpatch. Eventually she shows concern. In a childish, reluctant way she shares with Winfield flower petals when told to do so, sensing the family's dilemma:

> Ruthie felt how the fun was gone. "Here," she said. "Here's some more. Stick some on your forehead" (p. 499).

Initially Al fails to commit himself to the idea of concern for others. Unlike Tom, who without hesitation acts to accommodate the family's needs, Al's immediate concern is himself and providing a "good time" for himself. He even at one point withholds money from the family's meager funds to buy beer for himself and Tom. He is also unable to realize the advantage of working together to benefit all. He shows this when he questions the rational of the migrants' search for work. He questions, "Wouldn't it be better if one fella went alone? Then if they was one piece of work a fella'd get it" (p. 283). However, he

fails to realize the gravity of the situation of the migrants who search for jobs. He is given the explanation:

> "You ain't learned...Takes gas to get roun' the country. Gas costs fifteen cents a gallon. Them four fellas can't take four cars. So each of 'em puts in a dime an' they get gas. You got to learn" (p. 283).

Al, however, eventually does show signs of responsibility and a promise of maturation. Although he seems again to be concerned with his individual need as he announces to Ma Joad his intention to leave the family even after Tom's reluctant but necessary departure, Steinbeck shows Al's developing sense of responsibility. Al also announces his intentions to marry Aggie Wainwright, much to the satisfaction of her parents, who are concerned about her honor and, ironically, about the possibility of supporting an unwed mother and a child.[13]

Rose of Sharon and Connie, like the other family members, initially are limited in their view of group awareness. they are, in fact, a burden to the family, as they display self-centered concerns such as Rose of Sharon's engrossment with her pregnancy and the hardships of the journey and both characters' daydreams of plans for their future. Steinbeck never allows Connie to change, as he ul-

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[13]Hunter, "Steinbeck's Affirmation," pp. 44-46.

timately deserts his wife; however, in an act which represents the thematic climax of the novel, the author does demonstrate a significant change in Rose of Sharon, as she gives a dying man life through the milk in her breast which was meant by nature for her still-born child.[14] Thus Steinbeck establishes a code of existence that directs the Joads and other migrants throughout the novel, as they pursue the hope for a better life.

The group's participants, reflective of Whitman's concept, become greater individuals because of their involvement. Some members remain mere participants and others become "representative men."[15] This is the case of Tom Joad and Jim Casy in the novel. In the opening chapters of the novel Steinbeck portrays Tom as a rather individualistic person, probably as a result of his stay in prison. Tom states, "I'm still laying my dogs down one at a time," and "I climb fences when I got fences to climb" (pp. 190-191). However, through his relationship with Jim Casy, his involvement with the family and other migrants en route to California and, agonizedly, his encounter with the owners in California, Tom epitomizes Whitman's concept through Stein-

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[14]Hunter, "Steinbeck's Affirmation," pp. 44-46.

[15]Carpenter, "The Philosophical Joads," p. 319.

beck's development of the theme of one's awareness of people "en masse."

Tom's gradual move toward this social altruism is evidenced in an argument involving a labor contractor during which Tom hits a deputy sheriff. Jim Casy allows himself to be arrested instead of Tom to prevent Tom's possible return to McAlester State Prison for breaking parole. Casy has in fact given Tom his first lesson in people "en masse," that is, of social awareness among people. Later in the novel Tom becomes a more active participant, as he helps thwart an attempt by sheriffs to raid the Federal Camp at Weedpatch. The camp situation further emphasizes Steinbeck's development of "I" to "we" concept, since the camp is a self-governing social organism responsible for its own maintenance. Tom's final conversion to the concept occurs as he avenges the death of Casy, who finally becomes a labor organizer. While hiding he contemplates Casy's ideas, and, as he relates those ideas in speaking to Ma Joad a final time, he expresses the ultimate ideal of group awareness:

> "But now I been thinkin' what he said, an' I can remember--all of it. Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that was his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't

> no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole. Funny now I remember. Didn' think I was even listenin'. But I know now a fella ain't no good alone...He spouted out some Scriptures once, an' it didn't soun' like no hellfire Scriptures...Goes, 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up...Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? An' if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken'" (p. 462).

According to Lisca, Tom has proclaimed "his spiritual unity with all men, and it is evident that he has moved from material and personal resentment to ethical indignation, from particulars to principles."[16]

Steinbeck also establishes a sense of "people en masse" through the actions of the character Jim Casy. As the novel opens, Casy has already begun to progress toward the Whitman concept of communal awareness. He reveals to Tom that he is no longer a preachers because he "Ain't got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful idears--but they seem kinda sensible" (p. 20). He begins to question his evangelistic purpose, which will later encompass a larger scope as his ideas begin to reflect the concept of the Oversoul of Transcendentalism. After an intense conversation with Tom about his "sinful

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[16]Peter Lisca, "The Grapes of Wrath," in Steinbeck: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Murray Davis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 98.

idears," Casy rationalizes the acts of man: "There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue. There's just stuff people do. It's part of the same thing. And some of the things folks do is nice, and some ain't nice, but that's as far as any man got a right to say" (p. 24). He finally concludes:

> "I figgered about the Holy Sperit and the Jesus road. I figgered, 'Why do we got to hang it on God or Jesus? Maybe,' I figgered, 'Maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit--the human sperit--the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of'" (p. 24).

Casy is developing a sense of "social prophecy" that will develop through his relationship with the Joads and other migrants. His theories are further confirmed as a result of his brief encounter with Muley Graves, a farmer who has decided to fight the system and not to leave the land of Oklahoma. Muley states, "If a fella's got somepin to eat an' another fella's hungry--why the first fella ain't got no choice" (pp. 51-52). Casy recognizes the underlying meaning of Muley's statement at this point; however, he does acknowledge that "Muley's got a-holt of somepin', an' it's too big for him, an' it's too big for me" (p. 52). Graves realizes, however, that his family and the many other migrants who have moved westward will never return to their homes. He explains to Tom and Casy:

> "Well sir, it's a funny thing. Sompin' went an' happened to me when they tol' me I had to get off the place. Furst I was gonna go in an' kill a whole flock a people. Then all may folks all went away out west. An' I got, wanderin' aroun'. Just walkin' aroun'. Never went far. Slep' where I was. I was gonna sleep here tonight. That's why I come. I'd tell myself, "I'm lookin' after things so when all the folks come back it'll be all right. 'But I knowed that wan't true. There ain't nothin' to look after. The folks ain't never comin' back. I'm jus' wanderin' aroun' like a damn ol' graveyard ghos'" (p. 54).

On one level Graves' situation serves as a phophecy of what is to happen to many migrants who move westward, while on another his situation serves as a variant type of the revelation that Casy will ultimately experience.

Steinbeck further emphasizes Casy's need to clarify his feelings as the character reacts to the deserted home of the Joad family. Casy acknowledges an inability to act based on past religious philosophy. He confesses, "If I was still a preacher I'd say the arm of the Lord had struck. But now I don't know what's happened" (p. 42). Although there is much indecision in his mind regarding his new-found philosophy, he still is able to express ideas pertinent to its basis. As he aids the Joad family in their preparation to leave Oklahoma, he replies to Ma Joad, who has commented on the tradition that it is a woman's job to cut pork, by saying, "It's all work...They's too much of it to split up to men's or women's work" (p. 117). Not until Casy has spent time in the Cali-

fornia jail as a result of his protection of Tom is he completely aware of his own intent and purpose. He explains this to Tom, who later in the novel meets him again as a strike leader:

> "Well, they was nice fellas, ya see. What made 'em bad was they needed stuff. An' I begin to see then. It's need that makes all the trouble. I ain't got it worked out. Well, one day they give us some beans that was sour. One fella started yellin' an' nothin' happened. He yelled his head off. Trusty comes along an' looked in an' went on. Then another fella yelled. Well, sir, then we all got yellin'. And we all got on the same tone...Then sompin happened. They come a-runnin', and they give us some other stuff to eat--give it to us. Ya see?" (p. 422).

Through this anecdote Casy illustrates the importance of participation as a social unit, and he has finally come to terms with his own speculation concerning love and brotherhood in regard to his fellow man.[17] Thus both men move analogously from stasis to action. Lisca notes that "as Tom moves from material resentment to ethical indignation, from action to thought to action again, so Casy moves from the purely speculative to the pragmatic."[18]

The final point noted in Carpenter's analysis of the Joads' move to social awareness is the author's development of the philosopohy of pragmatism developed by William James

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[17]Warren French, John Steinbeck (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1961), p. 102.

[18]Lisca, Critical Essays, p. 98.

and John Dewey. As indicated previously, Jim Casy established an attitude of practical action through lengthy contemplation and final application of ideas in reference to the survival of the migrants who are seeking, like the Joads, the dream of a better existence. As stated in "Affirmation and Protest in the West," Jim Casy and the Joad family demonstrate in the novel "a down-home blend of common sense and non-Christian American ethics."[19] They take courses of action based on consequences and the practical outcome as a result of the situation, rather than on contemplative theory. Therefore the Joads throughout the novel develop practical means of effective action and attitudes, as they in fact become "pragmatic lawbreakers" when the survival urge becomes more prominent as they strive hopelessly to achieve their dream.

Steinbeck's manifestation of practical action based on immediate consequences becomes apparent as he allows Tom Joad to break his parole in order to accompany his family to California. Tom, who has spent time in McAlester State Prison for killing a man in self-defense, resolves to leave their Oklahoma valley with the family. Here Tom establishes a precedent which defies conventional society and its laws, yet provides the reader with his pragmatic code of ethics.

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[19]Paul McCarthy, John Steinbeck (New York: Ungar Publishing Co., 1980), p. 75.

A second example of action that is considered non-ethical in the American society is the burial of Grampa while en route to California. Grampa suffers a stroke and dies quickly and quietly; however, the problem of his burial results in effective action based on practicality. The problem is expressed by Pa in the gathering of the family unit after Grampa's death:

> "We got to figure out what to do. They's laws. You got to report a death, an' when you do, they either take forty dollars for the undertaker or they take him for a pauper" (p. 152).

Because of their extreme necessity and their inviolable pride, the family wishes to take neither action. The family cannot afford to pay what constitutes almost one-third of the total amount of their funds for the trip to California, nor do they wish to become a charity case, submitting to a pauper's burial, which would lessen the dignity of the family. As a result they choose to do what is considered non-ethical and unlawful and bury Grampa themselves. Jim sums up the situation by stating, "You got the right to do what you got to do" (p. 153). Tom leaves a note in the grave which he hopes will serve as an explanation of their actions. Knowledgeable of the processes of the law, Tom also knows that the government may assume that Grampa could have been murdered and therefore begin an investigation. He suggests that the note tell Grampa's identity, give an

account of his death, and explain the reason why he is buried along Highway 66. That message, the family hopes, will satify the questions of the government if anyone disturbs the grave. Thus the family continues to perform acts contradictory to the established laws of society, but which become a necessity for survival.

The family continues to act outside the law for practical reasons. The death of Granma creates still another problem of ethics, as the continuing hardships of the journey erode the morale of the family. Rather than risk the possibility of not getting across the Nevada line into California, Ma Joad, who is gradually becoming the leader of the family, does not inform the family or the agricultural inspector of the death of the grandmother. Ma Joad is able to persuade the inspector to allow the family to continue their journey without the delay for inspection, explaining that the grandmother is extremely ill and needs medical attention. The other members of the family, unaware of the true circumstances, are astonished at the demanding attitude of the mother, only to find that this attitude became necessary to assure the successful crossing into California despite the corpse in the back of the truck. Ma Joad explains:

> "I was afraid we wouldn't get acrost...I told Granma we couldn't he'p her. The family had to get acrost. I tol' her, tol' her when she was a-dyin'. We couldn' stop in the desert. There was the young ones--an' Roseasharn's baby. I

> tol' her." She put up her hand and covered her face for a moment. "She can get buried in a nice green place...Trees aroun' an' a nice place. She got to lay her head down in California" (p. 252).

Steinbeck allows the character Ma Joad to emerge as a pillar of strength in the family unit. Her actions are typical of the Steinbeck character who "has an irrepressible will to live, even under heart-breakingly adverse conditions, and is resourceful and indomitable before the hostility of a world apparently bent on his or her extermination."[20] Ma Joad at this point becomes the strongest member of the family and therefore the head of the family. She displays, as indicated in "Affirmation and Protest in the West," an "understanding of men and of the nitty-gritty aspects of life...strong love for children...a recognition that in times of crisis and loss of a family member, others come first...and wisdom in the ways of people and women, expressing belief in female awareness of external forces and in the importance of courage and endurance."[21] Such qualities permit her to break moral laws and act in a practical manner for the sake of the family.

Finally, at a point of almost total surrender to the degradation forced upon them, the family commits yet another

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[20]John S. Kennedy, "John Steinbeck: Life Affirmed and Dissolved," in Steinbeck and His Critics (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957), p. 121.

[21]McCarthy, Steinbeck, p. 75.

pragmatic offense in the view of society. Symbolic of their inhumane condition as a result of dispossession and deprivation, Uncle John places the still-born child of Rose of Sharon in a box in a nearby stream which flows toward a populated area of town. Again, this act violates the codified laws of society; however, the Joads have no other recourse than to break them, for as Mrs. Wainwright states, "They's lots a things 'gainst the law that we can't he'p doin'" (p. 493). As a final statement of protest against the fruit growers and those responsible for the humiliation suffered by the Joads and other migrants, Uncle John refuses to bury the child and places it in a stream, commenting angrily, "Go down an' tell 'em. Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk...Go on down now, an' lay in the street. Maybe they'll know then" (pp. 493-494).

Relentlessly, Steinbeck in The Grapes of Wrath allows rebellious actions, as devoted Americans, conscious of the dream of individualistic survival experience, first an economic decline, both as a result of natural causes and of the technology of twentieth-century America, then a regression in morale and the physical declination of the family unit. However, concurrent with his theme of man in conflict with the

cruelest of circumstances, yet maintaining a measure of dignity and self-respect, Steinbeck allows the Joads to experience a measure of optimism throughout their ordeal.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis of the thematic structure of these three very significant novels of John Steinbeck, suggests that the author establishes a definite motif for them, which is the conflict between illusion and reality as it relates to the pursuit of the American dream. Although the development of the protagonists reveals substantially varied personalities, the author does continuously place these characters in similar situations and catastrophes. Steinbeck's characters in these novels range from those who seek romantic illusions that will never be realized to those who seek unromantic visions that cannot be realized because of forces beyond anyone's control to those who have to some extent realized a portion of their dream world only to have those valid images of meaningful life destroyed. All characters, because of external forces, both natural and societal, suffer the loss of what is considered a meaningful existence within the American social structure. All characters experience conflicts with continuously mounting circumstances that ultimately destroy the dream either as a result of those external forces or of internal forces which make the society inhumane or the victims of the society

subhuman. In conjunction with the study of the motif of illusion and reality, I have also examined several philosophies that the author utilizes in his development as they relate to Steinbeck's survival of the American dream.

In Tortilla Flat Steinbeck adheres to the concept of "Escape and Commitment" as it relates to man and his relationship to man. He establishes a bond between men to last so long as there is a substantial need. In the novel the focus is on Danny and the paisanos of the Monterey Valley who seek illusions based on self-centered, unrealistic fixations, and because the characters of the paisanos are in conflict with the traditional American values they cannot function successfully according to the mores of the society of which they wish to be a part. Their self-centered obsessions are based on a conflict between opposed ideas of individualism and dependence upon Danny and each other in the brotherhood. The novel shows significant parallels between the bond that Steinbeck establishes between the paisanos and the bond that Malory establishes between the Knights of the Round Table. Like the knights whose bond emanates from the search of the Holy Grail and yearned-for success in finding it, the paisanos' bond exists so long as there is a need to protect the Pirate's treasure, which is to be presented to San Francesco d'Assisi, and the need

to prepare the Pirate for the ceremonial presentation of his gift. After the Pirate's treasure has been given to the church and there is no longer a need to protect the treasure, the sense of purpose begins to fade within the group. The responsibility for the protection of the Pirate's treasure was, in fact, the talisman or the object of power which held the group together. However, when the "talisman" which allows Danny to suppress his need for individuality is no longer pertinent, the protagonist and central figure of the brotherhood's fraternal nature struggles with both his need to be an individual and his commitment to others. He therefore makes a fatal attempt at an expression of freedom. In a mysterious assault on the forces of nature, Danny suffers a traumatic death that remains a mystery in Tortilla Flat. His death also signifies the end of the brotherhood and the end of its illusion of a possible existence within any middle-class structure.

In Of Mice and Men Steinbeck establishes his non-teleological view of man and his existence. He notes that in such works as this the philosophy which supports the rationale for all natural processes involving man becomes void; in the novel there is no explanation for the events that determine the natural processes of life. There is simply no attempt to ascertain causation for those "things that happen" in life.

Those "things that happen" to Lennie Small and George Milton never become components of philosophical analysis. The author never seeks to create defensible thought concerning those series of events that inexorably destroy the dream of the two men. Their desires, unlike those of the paisanos, are considered by society valid and reasonable. However, society's rejection of Lennie's handicap, the existence of and ultimate conflict between others who are in effect "handicapped" in society, and the propensity towards unintentionally violent acts all become factors which prevent a normal existence. Steinbeck here also draws from Hegel the concept of the tragic hero in the figure of George Milton, who fails to become a truly tragic hero because of the lack of choices offered by a society that is much harsher than that of the Hegelian epoch. That harshness becomes apparent as Steinbeck allows the hero George to destroy the dream by destroying his companion.

Finally, the author utilizes the philosophies of Ralph Waldo Emerson and others of the Transcendental movement of early nineteenth-century America. He re-establishes, particularly and most explicitly, the concept of the Oversoul through the actions of Jim Casy, Ma Joad, and Tom Joad in The Grapes of Wrath. As the character Casy indicates, the American who has to some degree realized the goal of success

must act on a level which transcends all tangible aspects of American life. Through their tragedy, the migrants exhibit th idea of all mankind's being composed of one soul. Casy further indicates that all men act in accordance with the established Oversoul in the relationships that exist among men. Steinbeck further re-establishes the concept of Individualism, particularly as expressed by Walt Whitman in his current American society. He admires that quality in the Joad family which initially makes them the typical midwestern, independent American farmer. Nevertheless, just as Whitman praises the individual as pertinent to the entire society, so does Steinbeck establish that pertinence in the actions of the Joads and other migrants who seek communally to regain their dream in California. Finally, Steinbeck utilizes the James and Dewey concept of pragmatism which makes the possibility of re-establishment in the mainstream of American life virtually non-viable for those of the migrant world. The practical but illegal acts necessitated by the external forces of society make the migrants unacceptable in that society. However, as with many of Steinbeck's characters, that optimistic view which is a seemingly inherent characteristic of American life is also that quality which enables the Joad family to continue on to survival as individuals in American society.

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